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Circular Letter from
Mr. J. F. Welborn, President
COLORADO FUEL & IRON COMPANY

Colorado Fuel & Iron Company

When Vice President Hayes, of the United Mine Workers of America, came to Colorado in August, 1913, and for several years prior to that date, conditions in the coal mining fields, except in a comparatively small district immediately north of Denver, had been satisfactory to both miners and operators. A voluntary increase in wages of about 10%, without even the suggestion of demand on the part of the miners, had been made by the operators in April, 1912. The miners were earning an average of approximately \$4 per day. Cases of individual mines showed much higher averages. For example:

Month	Mine	Number men Employed	Average daily Earnings per man
August, 1913	Rouse	154	\$4.41
"	Bowen	114	4.27
October	Primero	108	4.98
"	Sopris	71	4.67
"	Gray Creek	40	4.90

In the last fiscal year prior to the strike The Colorado Fuel & Iron Co. operated 21 mines. The average number of miners employed (those engaged exclusively in digging coal) was 2340. At 13 of these mines where 1334 miners (or 59% of the total number) worked the year's earnings per man ranged from \$980.97 at Frederick to \$1259.14 at Tabasco. The working time at these 13 mines during the year was from 213 days at Gulch to 306 days at Berwind. Five of the mines where 675 miners (29% of the total number) were employed, showed year's earnings ranging from \$805.95 at Crested Butte to \$943.31 at Coal Creek, the working time being from 183 to 253 days. Two of the remaining three mines were closed down for a continuous period of almost half of the year and worked but 149 and 151 days respectively; the average earnings per man for the half year being \$599.66 at Lester and \$596.39 at Walsen. The one remaining mine worked 168 days-out of the year, the miners earning an average of \$4.54 per day, or \$764.08 for the year. Arbitrary deductions from these earnings are 50c per month for sharpening tools, \$1 per month doctor services covering the employe and his family, and whatever amount may be paid for powder, the total amounting to from 8c to 20c per day, and averaging less than \$4 per month per man. The correctness of these figures was proven in an examination made by certified public accountants chosen by the Governor and a committee of newspaper men.

The operation of company stores in coal mining camps in Colorado has been as advantageous to miners as to coal companies, as these stores have carried stocks of goods of the character required by miners, and prices have been as low and lower than those ruling on similar goods in near-by towns somewhat removed from the coal camps. In camps of The Colorado Fuel & Iron Co. deductions made on pay-rolls for purchases at company stores in advance of pay-days range from 7% to 13% of total pay rolls, the remaining 87% to 93% of wages being paid in cash twice per month. The total purchases made at company stores by employes and others including the deductions referred to, equal 22% of all pay-rolls.

In addition to these earnings, paid semi-monthly, and the right to trade where they pleased, the miners had an eight-hour work day underground and a checkweighman where they wanted it. It is not hard, therefore, to understand that they were satisfied with their conditions and opposed to a strike. The expressions of satisfaction with conditions and opposition to a strike on the part of the miners became the strongest

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during the period of agitation immediately following the arrival of Hayes vice president of the international organization, in August. At some of the mines the men expressed these sentiments before the strike took effect in signed statements, the number so expressing themselves running from 90 to 99% at certain mines.

The so-called convention held at Trinidad September 15th, at which a vote on the strike was taken, was composed of delegates chosen entirely by the officers of the organization. The number of delegates was made up largely from men who had been on strike in northern Colorado for about three and a half years, and practically all of the remainder had either never worked at the mines whose employees they claimed to represent, or had sought and secured a few days' work immediately preceding the strike and then attended the convention as delegates from those mines without having been chosen by the men whose interest they claimed to serve.

The vote of the mock convention, made up of delegates selected by the leaders--and not by the miners interested--was for a strike unless the operators would submit to their seven demands, which were as follows

- 1st. Recognition of the union.
- 2d. An increase of 10% in wages.
- 3d. An eight-hour work day for all classes of labor in or around the coal mines and at coke ovens.
- 4th. Payment for narrow work and dead work.
- 5th. Checkweighmen.
- 6th. The right of the miners to trade wherever they pleased, the right to choose their own boarding place, and their own doctor
- 7th. "Enforcement of the Colorado Mining laws and the abolition of the notorious and criminal guard system."

The first demand, recognition of the union, involved a contract between operators and the labor organization, under the terms of which the operators would have been required to collect from its employees and remit to the labor organization, all dues, fines and assessments that the organization saw fit to levy against the workmen. The 90% of coal miners--then non-union--would have been required to join the organization or leave the employ of the companies where they had been working for years. This demand, involving as it did the absolute closing of the "open shop" which has always prevailed in the Colorado coal mining fields, the operators would not consider.

As Colorado's coal mining scale was already about 20% higher than the scale in districts with which the Colorado coal competes, the granting of the second request for an increase in wages, would have been little short of business suicide. Moreover, Colorado miners were earning better wages than miners in any other part of the United States. Not excepting Wyoming whose scale is nominally higher than that in Colorado.

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An eight-hour work day, the third demand, had been given to the men before required by law.

The fourth demand, payment for narrow work and dead work of various kinds, had been the practice for many years, and as evidence that the men were not being robbed we can point to their earnings of from \$100 to \$190 per month, where they worked practically full time.

Checkweighmen, the fifth demand, had for many years been the privilege of the miners without interference, and at some properties checkweighmen were employed by the men.

Sixth. The men had enjoyed the right, without prejudice against them, of trading wherever they pleased, and were privileged to choose their own boarding place, the companies, with possibly few exceptions, not operating boarding-houses; but as to doctor, most of the larger companies had a well organized and conducted hospital department, to which all men were required to contribute \$1 per month, that entitling them to free medical and hospital attendance for themselves and families.

Seventh. The general coal mining law, prepared by a committee of operators and representatives of the miners, and passed at the session of the legislature which adjourned a few months prior to the strike, is considered second to none in the United States, particularly in the protection it affords to mine workmen. This law did not become operative until after the strike vote, but no fair-minded resident of the State doubts the ability of the regularly constituted authorities to secure its enforcement without the aid of the labor organization. The so-called "notorious and criminal guard system," referred to in the seventh demand, never existed, and that charge is apparently based on the fact that at most of the larger coal camps, where several hundred men were employed, it was customary to have a constable, or camp marshal, whose duties as peace officer were much the same as those of like officers in villages throughout the United States. Primarily, the duties of these officers were of a sanitary nature, including the general care of miners' houses.

Almost immediately after the strike vote, threats were freely made against those who were at work, that if they did not respond to the strike call they would be subjected to acts of violence, and in some cases the threats went so far as to hold out death as the result to those who continued at work. This naturally caused thousands of men who had previously declared their honest intention of continuing at work, to reconsider their determination and cease work. Probably two to three thousand men left the State and sought employment in other fields where there was no disturbance. The number of men employed at all coal mines in Colorado in September, 1913, was 12,346. The number employed in October was 7696. The reduction in force, representing the total number that responded to the strike call, was 4650, or less than 38%. In November the number employed in coal mines had increased to 8016, and in December to 9665. In March, 1914--the last month before the outbreak at Ludlow on April 20th--the total number of employees at coal mines was 10,146, or 79% of the number employed in the month of March, 1913. These men produced 82% of the March, 1913, output, indicating that the better class of men remained at work. The

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general curtailment of business throughout the west, including a marked reduction in the demand for steel, has been such that 10,000 coal miners in Colorado can produce more than enough coal to supply the demands on this state during this season.

The purchase of firearms by representatives of the United Mine Workers of America commenced before the strike vote had been taken and at a time when the organization leaders were stating for publication that the calling of the strike would depend entirely upon the men interested and that it was then uncertain whether or not there would be one. Within a short time after the strike took effect from 1500 to 2000 men in southern Colorado were fully armed and making almost daily attacks upon mine property and employes. In the six weeks after the calling of the strike and before the militia had taken complete charge of the strike district, ten coal mine employes had been killed, almost all of them from ambush and in cold blood, while in the repulse of attacks made by the striking forces upon those employed in the mines, four of their number were killed. The bands of armed strikers were generally led by Greeks, many of whom had never worked in the coal mines. Many of these leaders in the armed attacks were known to have had no connection whatever at any time with the coal mining companies.

From the early part of November and after the State Militia had assumed charge of the district, comparative quiet prevailed, and many of those who had responded to the strike call through fear, returned to work feeling that the presence of the Militia in the field made it safe for them to do so. The military forces were gradually reduced until on April 20th a small detachment of less than 50 men remained. These were stationed at and in the vicinity of Ludlow. On the morning of April 20th they were attacked by the strikers and their leaders from the Ludlow tent colony. It was supposed that all of the women and children had been removed to places of safety, as the soldiers had observed an exodus of women and children from the tent colony. The fight between the militia and their opponents continued throughout the day and during the battle the tent colony was destroyed, the fire having apparently started from an explosion within one of the tents while the soldiers were some distance away. When it became known that all of the women and children had not been removed from the tents, militiamen while under heavy fire from the strikers rescued several women and children from burning tents. The next morning it was found that two women and eleven children had been suffocated in a cave into which they had been taken and the opening to which had been completely closed. Evidence of a doctor at the military court martial held in Denver showed that the occupants of this cave were dead before the tent over it had been burned.

On April 23d, Lawson, international board member of the United Mine Workers of America, and one of the leaders of the striking forces in Colorado, in an interview published throughout the State, asserted that a war of extermination would thenceforth be conducted by the strikers. For about ten days thereafter armed bodies, varying in number from 50 to 400, attacked the town of Delagua from the hills and killed three men. They dynamited and burned buildings and equipment at the Empire, Southwestern and Green Canon mines at Aguilar, driving several men, women and children into the Empire mine and sealing the entrance with explosives. They kept up an almost continuous

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fire from entrenchments for about fifty hours upon the Walsen and Robinson mines near Walsenburg. These two mines closed down during this siege and the men working in and about the mine, to the number of 160, took up arms in defense of their lives and the property, thereby forming the real protective force at these mines. After the arrival of the militia in Walsenburg the battle was continued between the strikers and the militia, in which a surgeon wearing a Red Cross insignia was killed while attending a wounded soldier on the field. Later his body was robbed and two or more shots fired into it. They attacked the Chandler mine near Canon City and kept up a merciless fire from the hills for nearly forty hours, killing one man and finally taking possession of the camp by gaining admittance under a white flag. They attacked the Hecla mine in Boulder County, killing one man and wounding three. Several hundred of them marched on the Forbes mine in the early morning of April 29th, and in their attack on it killed nine employes, slaughtered all of the mules, numbering 33, burned the barn, boarding-house and several other buildings.

At the inception of the strike the coal mining companies promised protection to their employes who wished to continue at work. The 10,000 men now employed, as stated before, are sufficient to meet all requirements. The number out on strike in the entire southern Colorado district does not exceed 2,000, and those who have participated in the recent violence will probably number less than 1500.

We will always treat with our employes concerning any matters affecting their welfare, but we cannot and will not treat with the men who have been responsible for the killing of our workmen and the destruction of our property, or with their representatives, the officers and leaders of the organization.

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By *Wm. H. Hall*

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